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ABSTRACT

Beginning with an overview of the Tanzanian education system, this essay examines the problems associated with school library programs in Tanzania and reviews the steps being taken to improve those programs and enhance the effectiveness of school libraries within the Tanzanian educational system. The actions of the Tanzanian government affecting the performance of school libraries are recounted, the present state of school libraries in Tanzania is described, and the level of school library use is discussed. An outline of the support services provided to school libraries by the Tanzania Library Services is provided, as well as a list of steps toward the improvement of the school library system. (JL)

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# TOWARDS MORE EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAMMES IN TANZANIA

by

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# TOWARDS MORE EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAMMES IN TANZANIA

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## An overview of the education system

It seems logical to start this paper with a brief exposition of the education system and what it is trying to achieve. Education is considered to be one of the most important factors for the future development of Tanzania. It has therefore been accorded high priority since 1961 when independence was attained. One of the government's target since 1964 has been the achievement of the goal of self-sufficiency in high and middle level manpower requirements by 1980. In 1967, a wind of change took place and widened the corpus of the educational goals.

The concept of Education for Self Reliance enunciated in that year and of which Tanzania is the most celebrated exponent in Africa, has produced a revolution in the nature and character of education. The seven year primary education is designed to be complete in itself. Its curriculum is related to the tasks and other civic responsibilities which the children have to do after leaving School. Similarly, secondary schools prepare students for productive work in the rural areas. Education for self reliance lashes out the idea that the Tanzania education system should aim at producing arm-chair bureaucrats. It therefore seeks to break down the notion that primary and secondary schools mainly prepare school children and students for admission to Secondary Schools and institutions of higher learning respectively.

In the spirit of self reliance, both primary and secondary schools engage in the production of wealth as a contribution to their own upkeep, and generally to finance the vastly expanded education programmes without necessarily impairing the classroom teaching and learning process.

There have been remarkable developments in secondary, technical, professional, higher education and adult education but perhaps the most outstanding achievement is the earlier fulfillment of the Universal Primary Education (U.P.E.) target set in 1964 for its achievement in 1989. It has been made possible by the conscientious and systematic persuasion, mobilization, and involvement of the Tanzania masses in self help projects using the principles of self-reliance.

## The size of the problem

Undoubtedly, one of the potent factors in fostering education is functional and effective school library programmes. But the development and operation of school libraries in Tanzania is not an easy task. There are well over 10,000 primary schools and nearly 140 secondary schools.

On the other hand Tanzania is one of the poorest countries in the Third World block and its per capita income is hardly more than $320. She has very scarce resources for which education, health services, agriculture, industry and commerce compete. There is particularly a dire scarcity of finance and professional librarians who have teacher qualifications as well. The shortage of reading materials, especially literature with an African background is equally acute. In the circumstances it is a misnomer to talk of school media centres which are fashionable in developed countries especially in the United States although Tanzania has recognized non-book materials to be vital sources of information for many years. The textbook is still 'king' but it is rapidly gravitating towards obsoleteness. Resistance to school libraries is not widespread and will soon see its deathknell. Despite these problems which are by no means insurmountable, the government is anxious and resolutely determined to see School libraries elevated to a required standard.

Government action

Since independence, Tanzania has realized that School library resources are basic tools needed for the purposes of teaching and learning. For one thing, the scope of knowledge has become too vast to be covered extensively through the use of set textbooks and within the confines of classroom instruction, superior that may be.

As an initial gesture towards modernization of school libraries, the government accepted in 1960 Mr. S.W. Hockey's report on the Development of Library Services in East Africa, which envisaged the establishment of a school library service as an arm of Tanzania Library Service. At the time, School libraries were poorly organized and stocked, and the uncritical acceptance of gifts of books from donors was a common phenomenon. For example as recently as 1969, one school library was still keeping on its shelves a book called, How to boost your marks in American history, published in 1924. In some cases, libraries did not exist at all and the government did not have a definitive policy for their improvement. Although they still do not operate under the canopy of Tanzania Library Service, they have all along since 1964 been heavily dependent upon this organization for expertise and professional guidance.

Towards the end of the 1960s and following a request by the Tanzania Government, UNESCO provided an expert who was attached to Tanzania Library Service and whose terms of reference were: (1) to establish in selected Secondary Schools model School libraries which would act as sources of demonstration to teachers, school administrators and educators. (2) to provide advice and assistance to teachers in the selection of library materials and the operation of school libraries. In addition to the three model school libraries that were subsequently established, a school mobile

library which serves secondary schools in four regions was inaugurated in 1971. Generally speaking, school libraries made a great leap forward as a result of the UNESCO expert's work.

At the time the UNESCO expert was recruited in 1963, the government introduced the concept of Community library service. The Ministry of National Education in collaboration with Tanzania Library Service designed six public/school libraries which were to be located in secondary schools. It was the government's intention that they should serve the surrounding communities in addition to serving students. These libraries are now operational and are as large as Tanzania Library Service's regional libraries in terms of space, but have not quite succeeded in attracting adults living in their close vicinities. The idea is still alive and in recent years community primary schools have been established on the same principle.

Owing to shortage of trained library staff in schools, colleges and in other institutions, the government established a National Library Assistants Certificate Course in 1972. This course which admits junior secondary school leavers is conducted at the National Central Library in Dar es Salaam, and is essentially paraprofessional. Its duration is one year and a half and turns out 40 assistants annually. A Substantial number of its graduates are employed in secondary school libraries. This programme is very much short of the ideal, therefore it is regarded as an interim measure until such time that a full scale library education programme is initiated.

In 1975, the government made yet another move. It enacted the Tanzania Library Services Board Act 1975 which empowers the Board to advise on School libraries and requiring state and private schools to establish and maintain libraries according to prescribed standards of excellence. Backed up by the Act and the progressive forces in the Ministry of National Education, Tanzania Library Service is in the process of preparing such standards. It is the Ministry's intention that the standards should be as much as possible a product of cooperative efforts of librarians and educators if they are to be a definitive criteria for effective school library programmes.

Present state of school libraries

There are very few primary Schools which have libraries of any significance. In the majority of cases, they have a mere cupboard of books acquired by purchase. Otherwise many of the primary schools borrow heavily collections of books from the National Central Library, which is also the headquarters of Tanzania Library Service. Much as the Ministry of National Education would like to develop and modernize primary school libraries, it

is hampered by the lack of funds and the sheer numbers involved. In the meantime, priority is being given to the improvement of secondary school libraries.

At the end of the last decade, a study of secondary school libraries by the UNESCO expert in the name of Emma Frost revealed a number of shortcomings:

(a) 'In secondary schools head teachers receive a per capita grant to cover all expenditure and that the amount of this spent on the library is at the discretion of the head teacher.
(b) Primary schools receive no specific grant for school libraries and are dependent on donations or on raising money locally.
(c) In terms of numbers, the bookstock position in secondary schools is unsatisfactory; in terms of quality the books are out of date.
(d) The organization of the library is unsatisfactory and is normally in the hands of an already overworked teacher usually not qualified for library work.
(e) Very few schools have purpose built libraries and their equipment and furniture is unsuitable for library use.'
(f) The school library is not well used and if anything, it is used as a study area for senior pupils.

Although many school libraries still face problems of lack of funds, shortage of trained library staff, poor library buildings and the isolated, rather ineffective resistance to libraries among the less progressive school administrators and educators, many more school libraries have made great progress during the decade beginning in 1968. Virtually all secondary schools have library collections but they are marked by an extreme variation in their size, scope and depth of their collections as well as the effectiveness of the services they provide. Senior Secondary school libraries and the public/school libraries in particular have excellent buildings and receive greater attention.

School library use

In recent years, the Ministry of National Education has realized that what constitutes true education, and the most socially useful learning is learning the process of learning. This idea conforms to the concept of self-reliance which governs economic and political activities in the country. Therefore in addition to classroom performance, the school academic programmes incorporate a project requirement. Students have to cultivate the ability to conduct independent research using the school library resources and produce acceptable project reports in various subjects. The rate at which school libraries are used is directly proportional to the size, scope, depth and quality of the library collections. But the snag is that the majority of secondary school libraries are not large enough to enable the

students undertake project work without undue strain and frustration. As a result, a large number of schools constantly press the Ministry for better library facilities.

The use made of school libraries very largely depends upon the enthusiasm of heads of schools, teachers and library staff. In other words they have to motivate the students using various techniques. This means that teachers themselves must be avid users of library resources and develop a permanent habit of referring students to various sources of information. There has been great improvement during the last decade. Unfortunately, teachers and heads of schools change fairly frequently and it is not always possible to get enthusiastic educators dedicated to the value of school libraries. Besides, some of the educators who head schools or who design education programmes received their education at a time when libraries did not exist or at best they were considered a luxury. Hence they do not quite appreciate the true place of the School library in the educational process. The situation is however changing very rapidly as a new generation of educators who have been exposed to libraries at home and overseas is emerging. Right now the climate is auspicious for change. As politicians and parents focus their attention on the educational standards, values and principles; educators have identified inadequacies in conventional education programmes content and teaching techniques. In the change that is contemplated to meet this challenge, school libraries will offer a pivotal role.

Tanzania Library Service Supportive Role to Secondary School Libraries.

Since 1964, TLS has been the prime mover of School library development. Quite apart from the fact that TLS is legally empowered to coordinate the work of school libraries, it strongly believes in the value of library resources as basic tools for teaching and learning. TLS also believes in the contribution School libraries can make to the total development of students by encouraging self reliant study habits, and which can be carried into their adult life.

In pursuance of these beliefs, TLS has had to identify the problems, create conditions conducive to school library development and provide supportive services. Right from the start, the problems were identified as lack of appreciation of the role of school libraries in the educational process among the educators, reluctance to formulate a curriculum that encourages wide reading, inability of teachers to encourage students to read widely, a complete absence of qualified library staff, shortage of funds and absence of purpose built school library buildings. In order to grapple with these problems, TLS has had to educate, convince and advise educators and controllers of the public purse on the value of libraries through meetings, seminars and courses. Whenever possible it has encouraged the

establishment and use of school libraries by demonstration. In its endeavour to provide supportive services to schools, TLS has adopted three approaches:

(1) The National Central Library in Dar es Salaam provides the following services:

- Conducts a one year and a half National Library Assistants Certificate Course for Library Assistants who are absorbed by schools on graduation.
- Runs In-Service courses for Schools' library staff.
- Coordinates the work of school libraries in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education.
- Circulates at intervals lists of books suitable for secondary schools and which act as book selection aids.
- Recommends periodicals suitable for secondary schools.
- Compiles and regularly revises a Manual for Secondary School Libraries to guide teacher librarians and library assistants in the organization and management of their libraries.
- Produces a basic list of books suitable for secondary schools.
- Organizes seminars and courses for teacher librarians and School administrators in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education.
- Publishes books suitable for school children.
- Produces three to four times a year a magazine for young writers - consisting of original contributions in Swahili and English.
- Cooperates with the Ministry of National Education in designing school library buildings including joint public/School libraries for use by adults and students.
- Solicits funds and books from friendly countries for School libraries.
- Formulates and produces standards for school libraries in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education.
- Lends collections of 200-400 books to schools and exchangeable annually.

(2) Regional Libraries provide professional guidance and on the spot assistance in the establishment, organization and management of school libraries in their respective regions.

(3) The School Mobile Library lends books to schools in four regions. It makes three visits a year and its librarian acts in professional advisory capacity.

Tanzania Library Service is a large organization. Its operations are national and has many commitments. The services it provides to schools are therefore very minimal.

Towards more effective school library programmes.

In its endeavour to improve school libraries, Tanzania Library Service has faced a number of constraints:

(1) School libraries come under the Ministry of National Education and therefore Headmasters are answerable to the Ministry. There has been a tendency for them to ignore professional advice provided by TLS despite the fact that the need for effective school libraries is recognized.

(2) The Education Acts have at no time included clauses compelling schools to establish school libraries. This explains why the Ministry has for a long time lacked a well defined policy on school library development.

(3) The School curriculum has not put emphasis on the importance of various learning materials in the educational mission.

(4) There have been no school library standards which could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of existing school libraries.

If school libraries are to make headway and become instruments of instruction and learning the following steps ought to be taken:

(1) Amend the 1978 Education Act to include a clause to compel Headmasters to develop school libraries which can become true workshops of teaching and learning experience.

(2) On the basis of the library clause in the Education Act and the Tanzania Library Services Board Act 1975 Section 5 (1) (c), formulate by-laws or regulations which will bind Headmasters to establish and manage school libraries according to school library standards formulated by TLS in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education Headquarters.

(3) Ensure that the curriculum emphasizes the importance of various materials in the instructional and learning process.

(4) Make changes in the methods of instruction and improve the quality and quantity of library materials. Encouragement of independent study and individualized teaching in the nation's schools is bound to increase the importance of school libraries in the school curricula.

(5) It is important that teachers and librarians in schools are involved in selecting, reviewing and evaluating library materials. Librarians can contribute to the process from their knowledge of materials and their sources. They can also distribute to teachers publishers catalogues which are normally available free of charge from publishers. Teachers need to be involved in the selection of school library materials because it is they who will make use of the materials in instruction. In other words materials are apt to be used in the instructional programme if teachers participate fully in their acquisition.

(6) Each school library should have a library committee which includes a good number of teachers. The committee's work should be to determine library policy with regard to sources of funds, staffing, collection building, use of the library and so on.

(7) The state should provide adequate funds for school libraries. The individual schools can supplement treasury library votes from the proceeds of self help projects.

(8) Criteria for evaluation of school libraries should be the standards approved by the Ministry of National Education and Tanzania Library Service. Inspectors can also interview teachers and students on the use made of the library to determine its effectiveness to the total educational programme while performance in examinations can provide additional information.

Looking ahead

In view of the current wave to consolidate and improve the content and quality of the country's education, the future of libraries particularly in secondary schools is pretty bright if implementation is carried out as planned. The government now considers it vital not only to allocate adequate funds for libraries and provide better library buildings where they are of sub-standard or absent, but also to increase the education of teachers and principals on the role of libraries in the educational process, as well as the importance of involving them in the planning of school library services. The National Library Assistants Certificate Course is to increase its annual intake of students in order to improve the staffing situation in School libraries, and the training of teacher librarians will be more systematic and objective than it has ever been in the past. In the meantime a library school has been planned. These moves, coupled with the introduction of the Schools Inspectorate Division at the Ministry Headquarters, and the creation of the post of a professional librarian to coordinate the work of school libraries from the centre, are likely to have far reaching effects on the quality of education Tanzanian youth receive. However, a breakthrough will only come when the textbook takes a subordinate role to the general school library resources in the teaching and learning process, and when educators accept and start paying greater attention to the value of the products of modern technology such as the radio, television, video-tape, audio-visual tapes, and slides as equally powerful tools in facilitating the students learning experience.